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CDC Announces Negative COVID-19 Test Requirement from Air Passengers Entering the United States from the People's Republic of China

Press Release

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CDC is announcing today that it will implement a requirement for a negative COVID-19 test or documentation of recovery for air passengers boarding flights to the United States originating from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau. CDC is announcing this step to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the United States during the surge in COVID-19 cases in the PRC given the lack of adequate and transparent epidemiological and viral genomic sequence data being reported from the PRC. These data are critical to monitor the case surge effectively and decrease the chance for entry of a novel variant of concern. CDC will continue to monitor the situation and adjust our approach as necessary.

Variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus continue to emerge in countries around the world. However, reduced testing and case reporting in the PRC and minimal sharing of viral genomic sequence data could delay the identification of new variants of concern if they arise. Pre-departure testing and the requirement to show a negative test result has been shown to decrease the number of infected passengers boarding airplanes, and it will help to slow the spread of the virus as we work to identify and understand any potential new variants that may emerge.

Starting at 12:01 AM ET on January 5, all air passengers two years and older originating from the PRC will be required to get a test (such as a PCR test or an antigen self-test administered and monitored by a telehealth service or a licensed provider and authorized by the Food and Drug Administration or the relevant national authority) no more than 2 days before their departure from the PRC, Hong Kong, or Macau, and show a negative test result to the airline upon departure.

- The requirement applies to these air passengers regardless of nationality and vaccination status.
- This will also apply to persons traveling from the PRC via third country transit and to passengers connecting through the United States onward to further destinations.
- Along with applying this requirement to direct flights from the PRC, passengers transiting Incheon International Airport, Toronto Pearson International Airport, and Vancouver International Airport on their way to the United States will be required to provide a negative COVID-19 test if they have been in the PRC in the last 10 days no more than 2 days before their departure to the United States. These three transit hubs cover the overwhelming majority of passengers with travel originating in the PRC and the Special Administrative Regions. We will continue to monitor travel patterns, adjust our approach as needed, and keep Americans informed in a timely manner.
- Passengers who tested positive more than 10 days before the flight can provide documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in lieu of a negative test result.
- Airlines must confirm the negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery for all passengers before they board or deny boarding to the passenger.

CDC is also expanding the Traveler-based Genomic Surveillance program (TGS), a voluntary program that serves as an early warning system to detect and characterize new and rare variants of the virus that causes COVID-19. TGS collects anonymous nasal swabs from arriving international travelers on selected flights at major U.S. international airports. The program tests for presence of the COVID-19 virus, and if it is detected, the program sequences the virus's genome to identify any new variants. The program is expanding by adding additional airports (Los Angeles and Seattle)—bringing the total number of airports to seven and number of weekly flights covered to approximately 500 from at least 30 countries across all World Health Organization (WHO) regions. This includes approximately 290 weekly flights from PRC and surrounding areas.

TGS has proven to overcome gaps in global SARS-CoV-2 variant surveillance that occur as many countries decrease or discontinue testing and sequencing. During the initial weeks of the Omicron surge, TGS detected two Omicron subvariants, BA.2 and BA.3, and reported them to the global database weeks before they were reported elsewhere, demonstrating that the program is able to detect variants early.

The approach laid out, when layered with existing CDC recommendations such as masking during travel, self-monitoring for symptoms, and testing for three days after arrival from international travel, will help make travel safer, healthier, and more responsible by reducing spread on planes, in airports, and at destinations and to be on alert for any potential variants emerging. Our new testing policy, along with expansion of TGS, will help to protect travelers and the health and safety of American communities.

CDC also continues to work with WHO and partner countries to enhance sequencing capacity and improve the global capacity to detect new variants.

This order will become effective on January 5, 2023, at 12:01 AM ET. More information will be made available by CDC in the coming days. For a list of authorized tests, check here [\[link\]](#).

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [\[link\]](#)

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